

Subject: Keep Shore Line East funding in the Governor's budget

Esteemed members of the Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony. I am a resident of Groton and a Shore Line East rider who is concerned about the state's transportation priorities. I use the SLE daily to commute to New Haven to work. Any reductions in the current service will have an adverse effect on my commute and hence my job.

Please keep the current level of Shore Line East service in the budget.

I am extremely concerned that in a tight budget year, the Governor's transportation funds for Shore Line East service will be cut to 50% of current levels. I am also concerned that we prioritize car transportation over rail, to the detriment of our Southeastern Connecticut citizens and businesses.

I primarily think keeping SLE service in the budget is important because service reductions or raising fares may kill rail forever.

We're already heard from New London residents who commute to New Haven on Shore Line East to work that one of the reasons they can't use rail all the time is that there's no way for them to get back to New London in the middle of the day if they needed to care for their children. Rail service that is not practical makes it less attractive to use, and then fewer riders leads to a snowball effect of declining ridership. We may never recover the momentum that has begun.

Current rail investments have been a success that need to be maintained. If a good, economical and reliable service is available, there will be riders. The relatively small investment in extending weekend SLE service to New London has paid off. New London is now the third busiest weekend train station, behind New Haven and Old Saybrook. Clearly if adequate commuter rail is available, it will be used.

Investing in automobiles is a losing proposition and one that doesn't position the state to be successful in a changing world. One car traveling between New London and New Haven generates 1,848 lbs. of carbon dioxide and 84 lbs. of pollution every month and consumes approximately 50 gallons of gas. **This is on a good day when I-95 is not a long parking lot.** Private automobiles use twice as much fuel and generate almost twice as much carbon dioxide and pollution as public transportation. There are also other advantages to reducing traffic on our highways. Getting stuck on I-95 is stressful and an awful waste of time for commuters. Finally, we cannot just keep on adding lanes to highways as a means to keep up with our transportation needs.

New generations of the work force are more interested than ever to ride rail. Connecticut is one of the few states where residents can enjoy a high living standard with public transportation to job hubs like Stamford, New York and New Haven. It's been recognized that Millennials are seeking out cities where they don't need to own a car. Connecticut can capitalize on this trend.

Thank you,

Wan Lau

